



OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC# **323-2015**

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Philip Levine and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: August 14, 2015

SUBJECT: **Update on the Park Ranger Program**

The Parks and Recreation Department in collaboration with the Police Department has begun the execution of the City's Park Ranger Program. On April 27, 2015, Sergeant Alexander Torres began working with the department to create the program. Phase one will provide in-house security services at:

- Soundscape Park
- South Pointe Park and Pier
- Flamingo Park
- North Shore Park & Youth Center
- North Beach Area Parks

As a result, the City's contracted security officers will no longer be assigned to these areas.

Experienced team members in Policing, Code Enforcement and Parks & Recreation are working together to ensure all of the necessary pieces come together in order to launch a successful program. Immediately upon Sergeant Torres' assignment, he began communicating with different municipalities who have implemented similar programs. After researching the different programs, Sergeant Torres was able to establish a staffing plan and identify other needs in order to successfully implement the program.

The program will employ one Park Ranger Supervisor, five Full-Time Park Rangers and eight Part-Time Park Rangers. The positions were advertised to the public for two weeks beginning on May 15, 2015. There were 237 applicants for the Park Ranger Supervisor position and 813 applicants for the Park Ranger position, all of which had to be screened for eligibility by the Human Resources Department. The final eligibility list resulted in 169 Park Ranger Supervisor candidates and 464 Park Ranger candidates.

Subsequently all Park Ranger Supervisor applications were thoroughly evaluated and 20 interviews were conducted. The Park Ranger Supervisor position was offered to a candidate the week of August 3, 2015 and the candidate is currently in the background screening process with the Human Resources Department. Once the candidate passes the background screening, he will then go through a secondary background check with the Police Department. The supervisor's estimated start date is the week of September 14, 2015, at which time he will assist Sergeant Torres with preparing for the arrival of the Park Rangers.

Eighty-two applicants will be interviewed for the Park Ranger position beginning the week of August 17– August 25, 2015. We estimate the interview panel to make their recommendations to hire by August 31, 2015 and for the Park Rangers to be on board by October 19, 2015.

Once the Park Ranger's begin, they will all be required to participate in a 1-2 week training to earn their ATV and Bike Certification and take a self-defense course. They will also be trained on radio procedures and on issuing citations, as well as participate in basic employee orientation. Also planned are site specific trainings. By being trained onsite, the Park Rangers will be more aware of their expectations and will be able to speak with park staff about any reoccurring concerns and issues unique to that specific site.

Along with the interviewing and hiring process, uniforms, transportation (bikes and ATVs) and radios are being purchased. Sergeant Torres has met with the EOC to review the communication process and is currently finalizing details on the dispatch system. Many other details such as the review of schedules and developing standardized operating procedures are being finalized in the upcoming month.

A soft launch of the program is expected to commence at the beginning of October 2015 where by the Park Ranger Supervisor and newly hired Park Rangers will begin to have presence at the parks. It is estimated for the Park Ranger Program to fully launch at the various sites by mid November 2015. Future expansion of the program into other park areas will be reviewed and considered for the future.

JM/JMT/JR/EV

A handwritten signature and initials, likely belonging to the author of the document, positioned to the right of the typed name 'JM/JMT/JR/EV'. The signature is written in dark ink and appears to be a stylized 'J' followed by a large 'M' and a smaller 'T', with a vertical line extending upwards from the top of the 'M'.